

Reelfoot

National Wildlife Refuge



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1941.
- Acres: 10,428.
- Located in Obion County, TN and Fulton County, KY.
- Other management: water level management on Reelfoot Lake and associated 25,000-acre wetland.
- Location: the refuge headquarters is located 15 miles southwest of Union City, TN on Highway 157 near the Walnut Log Community.

Natural History

- Refuge habitat created by a series of violent earthquakes from December 1811 to February 1812.
- Large concentrations of ducks, geese, raptors, wading birds and shorebirds.
- Reelfoot Lake area has the largest concentration of wintering bald eagles in the continental United States.
- Several rookeries present along with bald eagle and osprey nests.
- Habitat acreage:
 - Open water ... 2,085
 - Wetlands 1,148
 - Woodlands 6,048
 - Croplands 1,147

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Four-person staff.
- 265,000 visitors annually.
- The Reelfoot Lake area generates over 27 million dollars annually in outdoor recreational pursuits. Reelfoot NWR is instrumental in providing the resources for these activities.

- Base funding is from Reelfoot NWR Complex budget. Base funding for FY 98 for Reelfoot, Lake Isom, Chickasaw, and Lower Hatchie National Wildlife refuges and Sunk Lake Public Use Natural Area is \$573,900. The Reelfoot NWR Complex Administrative Office is located in Dyersburg, TN and has a two-person staff.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat for migratory waterfowl and other birds.
- Provide habitat and protection for endangered species.
- Provide recreation and environmental education for the public.

Management Tools

- Water management for waterfowl, wading and shore birds.
- Cooperative farming for wildlife.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious vegetation.
- Big and small game management with public hunting.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Cooperative partnerships.
- Volunteers.

Public Use Opportunities

- Wildlife observation.
- Two observation towers.
- Auto tour route.
- Photography.
- Hunting.
- Fishing.
- Trails.

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Calendar of Events

January: waterfowl concentrations of up to 400,000 ducks and 150,000 geese.

February: bald eagle population at its peak, over 200 on Reelfoot Lake area.

April: refuge quota turkey hunt.

May: Migratory Bird Day, excellent time for bird watchers.

June: National Fishing Week, Youth Fishing Rodeo.

August: squirrel hunt.

October: archery deer hunt and raccoon hunt.

November: refuge quota deer gun hunt.

Questions and Answers

How many eagles are there in the Reelfoot Lake area in the winter?

The number varies depending on weather conditions and winter season. The refuge, in cooperation with state agency partners, conducts aerial census/surveys in December, January, and February each year. The Reelfoot Lake area winters 150-200 bald eagles annually. This information is widely distributed for wildlife observers.

How do I apply for the refuge deer quota hunt?

The refuge accepts applications for the deer quota hunt during the month of July. Applicants submit a U.S. Postal Service post card with their name and address and their hunting partner's name and address (two may apply on the same card) to the refuge. The quota hunt drawing is held the first Friday in August and selected parties are notified by mail. The individuals not selected are notified by the post card they submitted.

Does the refuge have camping facilities?

No. The refuge does not have camping facilities; however, there are several state and private concerns that provide accommodations near the refuge. Many are a short drive or boat ride from the refuge.

Can you provide a tour of the refuge or meet with our group about the refuge?

Yes. The refuge provides educational, interpretive and informational opportunities to a host of civil, non-governmental, and educational organizations. The refuge maintains the largest "Watchable Wildlife" facility and administers one of the top five Resident Volunteer programs in the Southeast Region. The Visitor Contact Station at Walnut Log, TN provides displays and audio/visual programs and is open to the public 7 days a week.

What's the current water level elevation of the lake?

Reelfoot NWR was established in 1941 under the terms of a 75-year lease agreement with the state of Tennessee. The agreement states that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will control the water level on the 13,000-acre Reelfoot Lake and the associated wetlands. There are several special interest groups around the lake (farmers, resort owners, commercial/sport fishermen, waterfowl hunters, lake bank residents, etc.) that have a keen interest on how lake levels are managed. The water levels are:

March 15-November 15: 282.2 msl (mean sea level)

November 16-March 14: 283.2 msl